Award-winning artist captures dancers in bronze sculpture for Great Northumberland at Cheeseburn

Monday 13 August, 2018

Artist, Joseph Hillier has collaborated with dancers, Lizzie J. Klotz and Maria Vincentelli to develop a unique piece of work marrying traditional techniques with modern technology

Cheeseburn welcomes art-lovers for the final time this summer, and visitors are in for a real treat with a specially-commissioned exhibition from award-winning artist, Joseph Hillier, featuring ‘pause/play’ – a collaboration between Hillier and dancers, Lizzie J. Klotz and Maria Vincentelli.

The new exhibition is made possible by Great Northumberland – a summer of art, culture, heritage and innovation across Northumberland, which is part of the Great Exhibition of the North ‘Inspired By’ programme and designed specifically to get visitors to the region to explore the country’s most northerly county.

Previous visitors to Cheeseburn, located in Stamfordham, will have noticed Hillier’s sculptures in the formal garden and now, in a continuation of Cheeseburn’s long-standing relationship with the North East-based artist, visitors will have the opportunity to see a major solo exhibition of brand-new works, including bronze-cast sculptures in the Stables Gallery, a light and sculpture installation in the Hayloft space, and further works in the Stables Project Space.

But, it’s the collaboration with Klotz and Vincentelli that has got everyone talking. Working over a six-week period, Hillier invited the two dancers to create movements in response to architectural features of the studios they work in, as well as moments from their own choreography. And, through a fusion of ancient bronze casting and digital 3D motion capture technology, Hillier has captured the movements and gestures of the two dancers in mid-performance. The unique commission, which has been funded by Great Northumberland 2018, will be available to experience at Cheeseburn’s open weekends in late-August and early-September.

Says Hillier:

“I am incredibly grateful for the funding from Northumberland County Council, through their Great Northumberland programme, which has enabled me to realise this new body of work.

I’m very interested in human motion, and documenting it using digital tools – by taking digital information and turning that back into a solid object. Being able to comprehend and see a three-dimensional form based on motion, and my response to that, is what my exhibition at Cheeseburn is all about.

I’ve used 3D-scanning, motion technology and computer generation to make the sculptures. I want to push this idea of conveying human motion using digital technology; hopefully, this new body of work will also push the possibilities of figurative sculpture in a new direction.”

As well as having the opportunity to see Hillier’s sculptures, visitors to Cheeseburn can also experience live performances from Vincentelli, over the late-August bank holiday weekend, and Klotz over the first weekend of September. These performances will be pop-up improvisations in the grounds at various moments throughout the day – adding an element of surprise to the two weekends.

Says Klotz:

“Joseph contacted me after seeing me perform in a show at Dance City. Initially, it was quite a playful collaboration in that neither of us had worked with artists from each other’s backgrounds! At the time, I was in the midst of a rehearsal process for a dance piece, called ‘Fawn’, which comments on being a woman; the objectification of women, and being a dancer. For sculptors, typically the male creates the bronze of woman; with our collaboration, it was especially noteworthy that Joseph gave me as much of a voice in the creative process as he did himself.

For the September pop-up performances, I have deconstructed and re-worked ‘Fawn’ so that the dance can be presented at different sites across Cheeseburn. The piece was premiered in, and was made for, theatre, but Cheeseburn has provided me with the opportunity to deconstruct and imagine the work in a different context.”

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Another talking point of Hillier's solo exhibition is 'Blind' – an unusual installation, which involves the combination of strobe lighting and 3D-printed sculpture, alongside the sounds of the Talking Heads track with which the work shares its name.

Matthew Jarratt, curator at Cheeseburn, said:

"The solo exhibition with Joseph Hillier is a very ambitious one in that it features a variety of brand-new works. One of the many interesting things about Hillier's work is that he uses traditional bronze-casting techniques alongside cutting-edge digital techniques, such as motion technology and 3D-scanning. The ancient technique of bronze-casting is thousands of years old and I, for one, love that he is able to contrast these so beautifully with the more modern, 3D practices.

With the lighting installation in the Hayloft space, Hillier has been able to experiment with various elements, including record decks and strobing. At Cheeseburn, we love to offer sculptors the opportunity to exhibit their work, as well as allowing them to experiment with new ideas, which can sometimes surprise visitors, and challenge perceptions of what sculpture can be."

As if the opportunity to see the works of Hillier wasn't exciting enough, visitors will also have the chance to encounter the remarkable sculptures of acclaimed Chinese artist, Qi Yafeng, as well as the works of Louise Plant, Brian Thompson and Simon Hitchens. Additionally, those who weren't able to make it to Cheeseburn's previous open weekends in May, June and July are in luck, as Gillian Dickinson North East Young Sculptor of the Year, Peter Hanmer's winning installation, *Plato's Lair*, will be available to view in the Walled Garden Potting Shed once again.

Cheeseburn invites the public to visit this season, take a self-guided tour of the grounds, and marvel at the new work in the gallery space, alongside some forty other sculptures situated within the ten acres of landscaped gardens.

Notes to visitors: Entry with £5 donation to the Cheeseburn charitable trust. Regrettably Cheeseburn cannot accommodate dogs due to active farmland within the grounds. Wear appropriate footwear. Parking available. Café serving homemade snacks is cash only. Cheeseburn is not fully wheelchair accessible, please contact us in advance.

Event Details

Cheeseburn is open to the public as follows:

Saturday 25, Sunday 26 and Monday 27 August, 11am – 4pm – part of Great Northumberland 2018; with pop-up performances from Maria Vincentelli

Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 September, 11am – 4pm – part of Great Northumberland 2018; with pop-up performances from Lizzie J. Klotz

Both weekends include a major solo exhibition of sculptures by award-winning artist, Joseph Hillier. Hillier has developed a unique piece of work through a collaboration with Northumbrian dancers, Maria Vincentelli and Lizzie J. Klotz. Through a fusion of ancient bronze casting and digital 3D motion capture technology, Hillier has captured the movements and gestures of the dance in mid-performance.

Company Contact:

Crystallised

T. 0191 691 1370
E. hi@crystallised.co.uk
W. https://www.crystallised.co.uk

Additional Contact(s):
Jane Imrie | jane@crystallised.co.uk

View Online

Additional Assets:
http://cheeseburn.com
http://www.greatnorthumberland.co.uk
http:/www.josephhillier.com
http://www.lizziejklotz.co.uk

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